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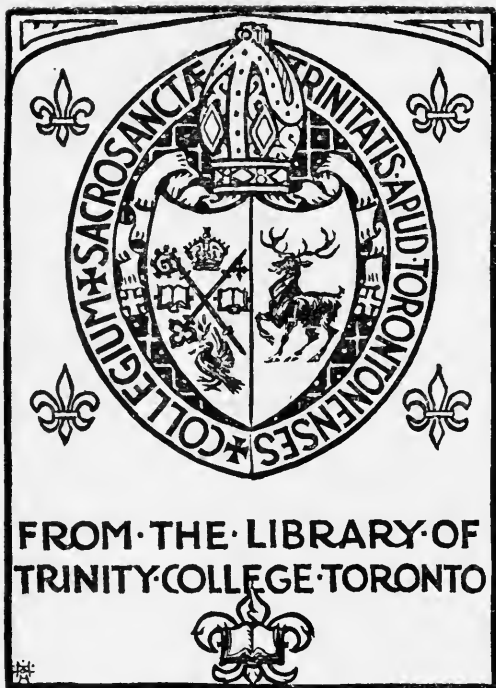


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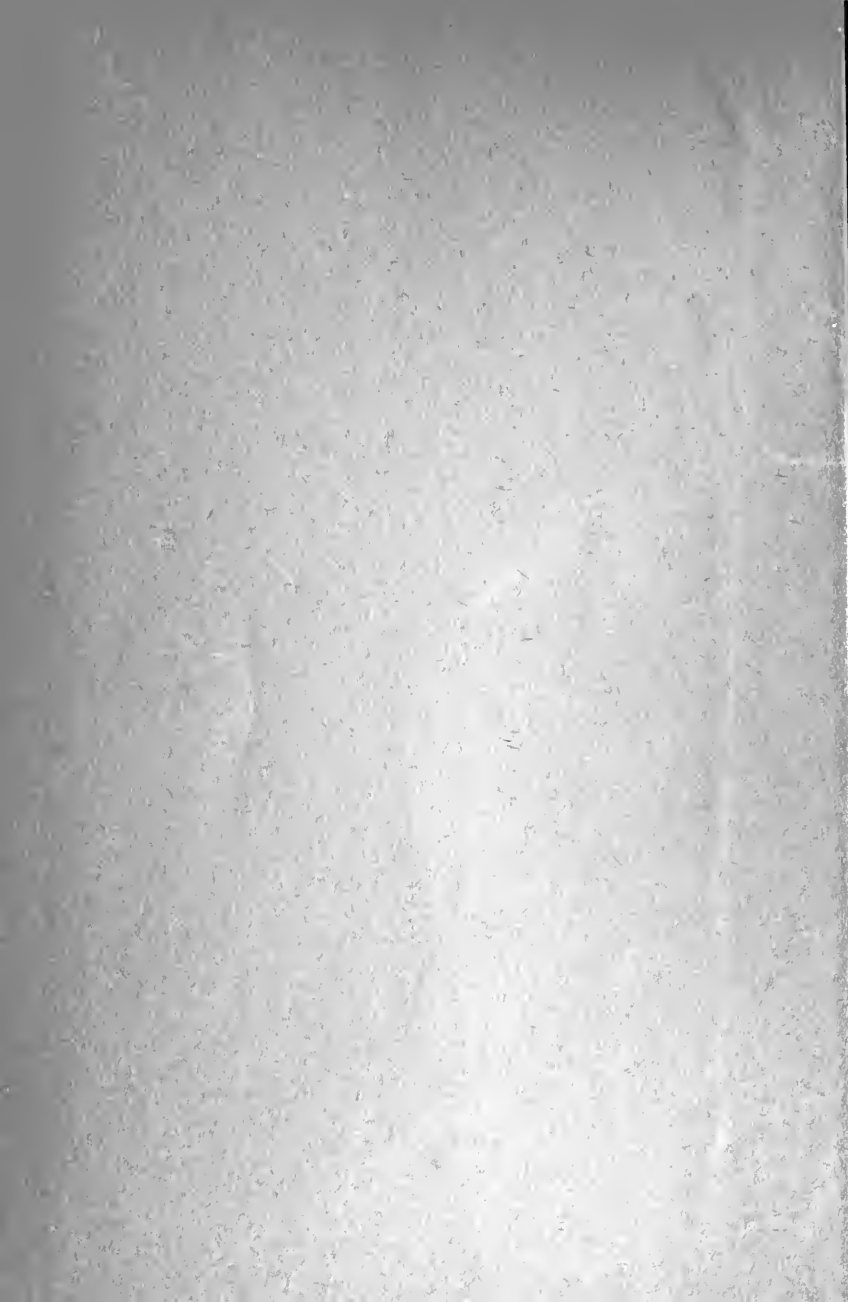
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HARVEST HOME



HARVEST HOME

A

Sheaf of Sermons contributed

by

THE RT. REVD. BISHOP WELLDON, *Dean of Durham*

THE REV. DESMOND MORSE-BOYCOTT, *Hon. Assistant Priest at St. Mary the Virgin, Somers Town, and author of "Ten Years in a London Slum" (14th Thous.), "God and Everyman", etc.*

THE REVD. FRANCIS UNDERHILL, *Warden of Liddon House, Priest in charge of Grosvenor Chapel and Canon Theologian of Liverpool Cathedral.*

THE REVD. CANON ROSE, *Vicar of Brighton.*

THE REVD. PERCY MARYON-WILSON, *Vicar of St. Mary the Virgin, Somers Town, and Magdalen College (Oxford) Missioner.*

THE REVD. THE HON. JAMES ADDERLEY, *Rector of St. Edmund's Church, Lombard Street.*

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A SERMON

BY

THE RT. REVD. BISHOP WELLDON,
D.D. (DEAN OF DURHAM)

“The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”—JEREMIAH viii. 20.

TO-DAY is the Festival of Thanksgiving for the Harvest. “The kindly fruits of the earth,” as they are called in the Litany, are God’s gifts; and to-day we gratefully acknowledge them to be His. “The harvest is past.” Its wealth, which is the people’s food, has been gathered into the garners; and we half-unconsciously realize that the Divine bounty has once again delivered us from the fear of want through the coming winter.

“The summer, too, is ended.” It may be said to end with the cessation of summer time. Willingly or unwillingly we are preparing ourselves for the duties, the interests, the occupations, the festivities of winter. It is difficult to escape a feeling that the autumn, beautiful as it is, strikes a sadder note than the spring-tide, if only because the anticipation of better things as the

year advances may be said to begin at Easter, but may also be said to end on Michaelmas Day.

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended," and both upon the harvest and the summer alike there are reflections which must occur to all thoughtful minds. The harvest, in Great Britain at least, has been in some measure spoiled by the inclemency of the weather. Agriculture differs from other industrial occupations as being so largely affected by the climate. However carefully the farmer may sow his seed and tend his grain, he is always at the last dependent upon the weather. "The husbandman," as St. James says, "waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and later rain." But if this is his fate in Eastern countries, it may in England be his fate to see the fruits of his labours practically ruined by a long series of rainy days and weeks. That is a reason why the agricultural interest appeals with peculiar emphasis to all citizens. I do not enter now and here upon political questions. A clergyman in the pulpit represents no politics except the politics of Heaven. But no student of social phenomena can doubt that the workers on the land supply a necessary counterpart to the workers in mines and factories. They are men who are characterized by noble moral

qualities ; they live a healthy daily contact with Nature ; they realize, as perhaps no other class can realize, their indebtedness to their country ; and in Great Britain, which does not at the present time produce half enough food to maintain its people alive, the consequence of war may be, as it was during the Great War of 1914, an imminent danger, not perhaps of starvation, but of serious privation. It may be worth while then that even the poorest of citizens should pay a slightly enhanced price for their food rather than that they should run the risk of being left without food at all.

At all events the Festival of Thanksgiving for the harvest is one of the most popular of voluntary observances in the Church of England. People who do not generally go to Church, go to Church then, and they go no less in the city than in the country. I have been told that in the East-End of London the two occasions on which the churches are generally crowded with worshippers are the Watch Night Services and the Services of Thanksgiving for the Harvest.

Will you then let me try to suggest a few special reasons for gratitude to Divine Providence for the ingathering of the fruits of the earth at harvest-tide ?

One is, I think, that everyone recognizes the harvest as a signal instance of God's favour to mankind. The

harvest is not man's work alone ; it is God's work rather than man's. Apart from the fertilizing power of the earth, all human labour would be in vain. God it is, and He alone, who in St. Paul's words at Lystra "gives good and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." "The earth indeed bringeth forth fruit of herself ; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." There is no more wonderful thought than that the many millions of human beings are constantly fed. How few people in Great Britain have ever known what it is to be hungry ! He who has lived once, as I have, through a famine in India knows that the children of the poor in England, although they may not be always adequately nourished, are yet not starving. Even in India the habit of self-control, if it existed among the natives in the procreation of children, might, with the help of the beneficent irrigation which the Government is spreading over the country, suffice to keep the people alive, all the more if child marriage and the consequent physical weakness of the children who are born should cease to be. For if the harvest in one country is scanty, it may be plentiful in another. The sodden harvest-fields in Great Britain may be compensated by the bonanza harvest in Canada ; and,

as locomotion improves, it becomes ever less difficult to supply food where the food is most urgently needed.

May I say a word of well-nigh sorrowful retrospect upon the changing conditions of agricultural life? How well I remember the happy relation of the farmer and his labourers in the old days! I reflect how the farmer would lead the squire and other rich neighbours into the harvest field, how after a brief exchange of greeting the labourers would suggest a largesse, and how the sympathy, which almost made amends for meagre wages, would seem like the sunlight of Heaven to irradiate the earth. It was easy to recall the scene of Boaz in the Book of Ruth when he came from Bethlehem and said unto the reapers, the Lord be with you, and they answered him, "The Lord bless thee." Machinery has changed life in the country as it has changed life in the towns; and I am afraid even the opportunity of gleaning which Ruth enjoyed after the reapers had done their work is now an experience of the past. But a Festival of Thanksgiving for the harvest may remind you how many of our Lord's parables are drawn from agricultural life. He speaks of the seed scattered upon the surface of the earth, of the dangers which beset and may even frustrate its growth, of the stages in its growth, the blade, the ear, the full corn in the ear, of the wheat and the tares

growing side by side, and of the final discrimination between them at the harvest. "Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."

Are there not here lessons of deep moral and spiritual value? There is the high responsibility of parenthood, a responsibility which is only too often ignored or forgotten in the present day. For the begetting of a child is the most solemn act of which any human being is capable, and it is the act which is too often performed with an almost reckless levity. Few lessons are more needful to-day, and few perhaps more difficult to teach, than that citizens, even the poorest citizens, are not entitled to cast off all the cost and care of their children upon other citizens, who are foolishly called "the State". Again there is the high value of education, which should be adapted with a scrupulous, scientific care to the varying ages of the young, yet should always be directed to the goal of true patriotic Christian citizenship. Who can look out upon the world to-day, who can study the contrast between Christian lands and lands which have never known Christ or have cast off the Christianity which once was theirs, and not see that Christendom is itself the creation of Jesus Christ, and that apart from His authority neither honesty nor

purity, nay, not even mere humanity, is safe against the inroad of animal instincts and appetites. But the solemn truth remains that as a man sows so he will reap. He who sows to the flesh will reap corruption, he who sows to the Spirit will reap eternal life. The lessons of the sowing and the reaping are no less applicable to nations than to individuals ; for the nations too shall stand before the throne on the supreme day when the reapers shall be the angels and the harvest shall be the harvest of men's souls.

Nobody can fully understand the harvest unless he studies it in the light of Christ's teaching. For the parallel which He so often drew between the operations of nature and of grace is a witness to the unity of Divine Providence, to the God who is the Creator and the Sustainer both of the temporal and of the spiritual lives, and who shall be the ultimate Judge of all men and all nations of men. More and more clearly are thoughtful minds coming to realize that Nature with all its ramifications is always and everywhere one—one mysterious and beneficent manifestation of the one Almighty God.

In the memory of our Lord's parables let me draw attention to one teaching of His which is apt, I think, to be misunderstood. He is reported in the fourth

Gospel as having said in reference to His own crucifixion "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." It is so that St. Paul in his great chapter upon the resurrection writes. "But some man will say : How are the dead raised up and with what body do they come," and he adds : "Thou foolish one, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." Then the critics argue that the seed is not dead ; it is alive, although it is buried in the earth ; it is not like a dead body laid in the grave. I sometimes think that clever people are apt to be the most foolish. The seed, of course, is not dead ; it does, indeed, come to live again ; but so is it like the body. When the earth is committed to earth, the dust to dust, the body is in God's sight not dead but alive, only sleeping, as the grain sleeps in the soil, and like the grain it will arise to its final heritage of immortality.

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." In the chapter from which my text is taken the Jewish people, conscious as they are of their own failings and wrong-doings, are crying for salvation. "Is there no balm in Gilead ? Is there no physician there ? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered ?" The same cry it may be is heard

in England to-day. We are not saved. We are still suffering through grave, national evils; and the only balm is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No hope for the nation or the Empire or the world exists save in His golden rule of truth, goodwill and mutual sympathy, of doing unto others as we would they should do unto us. There lies the salvation of Democracy. For if Democracy means the unceasing war of classes, the distrust and the ill-will which lead the rich to aim at oppressing the poor, and the poor to aim at despoiling the rich, then the British Empire will go the way of all Empires, ancient and modern, which the world has known.

Let us bear our burdens, let us bear one another's burdens. Let us make some sacrifice and make it gladly, all classes alike, for the good of the whole. The world of nations seems to be learning, what the world of common men is in danger of forgetting, that salvation lies in the rule of Jesus Christ. It is that rule which will heal the wounds of international life. That is the rule which inspires the efforts now being made for general disarmament, for universal peace. But the nations like men and women need a change of heart. They need to think good, not evil, of one another; they need to remember the great rule of mutual sympathy. We are

children of one family and the one Father of us all is God in Heaven.

Such then is the moral revelation of the harvest-tide. It bids us to prepare ourselves for the final judgment. It bids us to love righteousness and to hate iniquity ; for so and so only shall there at the last be peace on earth, as the peace of the holy angels in Heaven.

A SERMON

BY THE

REV. DESMOND MORSE-BOYCOTT

AUTHOR OF "GOD AND EVERYMAN"

"... the great and wide sea also : wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts."—PSALM civ. 25.

No Harvest-tide thanksgiving is complete without an expression of gratitude for the fishes of the sea. Let us not forget that if Christ walked through the cornfields on the Sabbath Day, and saw in them a picture of the world awaiting the harvesters whom He should send, He also sent St. Peter to catch a fish wherein He should find a coin to pay His taxes with ; and chose, in the main, fishermen for His Apostles, not farmers.

I am afraid we overlook the sea in our thanksgiving for the Harvest, perhaps because we cannot very well bring fish into church as we bring loaves, and sheaves of corn, and bunches of grapes. But, at any rate, at some seaside places at Rogation-tide there are blessings of the sea, as there are blessings of the fields in the countryside, and I think we should agree, especially if

we are very poor, that fish is as necessary for our existence as potatoes.

It will be appropriate, therefore, if I bring before your mind the rugged figure of the impetuous Prince of Apostles, Saint Peter, the fisherman. When Christ had given to the seven disciples on the shore of Genesareth the breakfast of fish He had prepared for them, He took Peter for a walk and said to him: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."¹ *When thou wast young.*

Our outlook on life when we were young was different from our outlook now. It looked so endless. When we were young the shadow of death was really no shadow at all. We knew that we should have to die some day, but the day of death was too remote, to our minds, to be thought upon. Life was full of merry-making in the sunshine, and although there were April showers sometimes, or even heavy storms, when we fell into scrapes, they were but for a while. We did our lessons keenly or otherwise, but without realization of their immense importance. Perhaps our consciences were sufficiently

¹ St. John xxi. 18.

awake to make us realize that some things to be desired were sinful while others were innocent. But the possibility of one thing had simply not entered our minds, that of suffering. I do not mean occasional aches and pains, toothache and sprained ankles and hacks at footer, I do not mean merely physical suffering at all ; I mean that sort of suffering which, for want of a better phrase, I will call the *suffering of living*, or the *suffering of effort* ; that is to say, the living of a life that calls for continued courage every moment. We could not have appreciated these words—for instance ; spoken by age to youth :

“In your hearts are the birds and the sunshine,
In your thoughts the brooklets flow ;
But in mine is the wind of autumn
And the first fall of the snow.”

When We Were Young

Now our Lord promised suffering to Peter, and contrasted a future helplessness with early vigour and freedom. The occasion was memorable, one upon which St. Peter must often have dwelt tenderly. “A few weeks have passed since the death of Jesus, and the scene is once more by the blue lakes of Gennesaret, and the familiar green hills, and in the spring, the loveliest time of all the year—the time of wild flowers and blossoming

fruit trees." Peter and a few companions were rowing ashore disconsolate. They had caught nothing. As they neared land dawn was breaking over the purple hills in the distance, and steeping with rose and gold the waters of the lake. It revealed the figure of a stranger, who hailed them, no doubt making a trumpet of his hands. His voice rang over the silent waters clearly: "Children, have ye any meat?" They were surprised, no doubt, at the inquisitive question, but answered civilly enough. They had not. Then came the injunction to cast their nets in again, upon the right side. They obeyed, perhaps because there was a strangely familiar ring in the voice; perhaps because they thought that the stranger had espied a shoal of fish. Soon their nets were full, and then the truth dawned upon St. John, Saint of the Sacred Heart, as he is called, because he leaned on our Lord's bosom at the Last Supper, and stood beneath the Cross with Mary, the Saint, I would bid you remember who, although a fisherman with a love for his craft (what fisherman ever loses that love?) left the sea out of his vision of New Jerusalem, because it had come to typify, as it beat upon the rugged rocks of Patmos, whereon, a prisoner, he saw the Revelations, restlessness and separation and danger, none of which things have any part in Heaven. "It is the Lord," he

cried, and immediately Peter the impulsive sprang from the boat and swam and waded ashore. There they breakfasted in silence.

Afterwards Jesus said to St. Peter, perhaps pointing to the other disciples in the distance: "Do you love me more than these love me?" It was a question asked tenderly, and yet it conveyed a rebuke. It was St. Peter who had protested that, though all should forsake Jesus, he would be faithful. He replied: "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." "Feed my lambs," said Jesus. A second time Jesus asked him: "Lovest thou me?" "Feed my sheep," he said, in answer to Peter's eager protestation. Then, for the third time, He asked, "Lovest thou me?" At this Peter was grieved and said: "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."¹ And the Lord said: "Feed my sheep." Thrice denied He forgave thrice . . . and promised suffering. Peter should stretch forth his hands and another should gird him, and carry him whither he wouldest not. Suffering was to be the crown of a suffering life; not a far-distant event looked forward to with dread for years, the abrupt fiasco of a life of vigorous freedom, but the outcome of that life, the end to which it had been meant to move from the day of birth. Hardship and peril and the fishing

¹ St. John xxi. 17.

of men with that wondrous patience which is the token of a true fisherman, were to be the necessary steps to his own crucifixion. And the crucifixion should be God's harvesting of a noble soul. How seldom do we embrace suffering as a necessary part of God's process of ripening our souls, for inclusion among the sheaves that He shall gather in His Bosom !

Of the truth of this culmination of St. Peter's life there is, I think, little doubt. We know that he was martyred in Rome, crucified with his head towards the ground. The tradition of the Church is strong in this respect, and the habit of despising the Church's traditions is a bad one. The traditions of a good family are believable.

There is a story, too, connected with St. Peter which has been made known by the film *Quo vadis?* Peter's friends, so it runs, had entreated the Apostle to save his life by leaving the city of Rome. He at last consented, on condition that he should go away alone. "But when he wished to pass the gate of the City, he saw Christ meeting him. Falling down in adoration he says to him "Lord, whither goest Thou?" and Christ replied : "I am coming to Rome to be again crucified." And Peter says to Him : "Lord, wilt Thou again be crucified?" And the Lord said to him : "Even so, I will again be crucified." Peter said to him : "Lord, I will return and

will follow Thee." And with these words the Lord ascended into Heaven . . . and Peter, afterwards coming to himself, understood that it was of His own Passion that it had been spoken, because that in it the Lord would suffer." So the Apostle returned to meet the death that Christ had prophesied on the shore of Gennesaret, to be girded by another and carried whither he wouldst not.

There is a passage in St. John's Gospel which would seem to support this legend. After the Last Supper Peter had said unto Him : "Lord, whither goest thou ?" *Quo vadis ?*—the very words the legend puts into the mouth of the adoring Peter on the Appian Way. "Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now, but thou shalt follow me afterwards. Peter saith unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now ? I will lay down my life for thy sake."¹ Can we doubt that Peter was haunted by the memory of these words all through his life, and that the old question *Quo vadis ?* rushed to his lips familiarly ? St. John wrote his Gospel long after Peter's death, and had to select his material carefully. As there were so many things that Jesus had said and done the whole world could not have contained the books that could be written, he quaintly says : ²

¹ St. John xiii. 36ff.

² The last verse of St. John's Gospel.

All the more reason, therefore, to value those he records. May he not have included one *Quo vadis?* story with the knowledge that it would interpret to his readers the later *Quo vadis?* episode. And whoever wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews may have been thinking of it, too, when he speaks of the impossibility of renewing unto repentance those who fall away in time of persecution "seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." ¹

Beloved, there is no limit to the eagerness of God to bestow upon us the gifts and graces that were given to St. Peter. Though God had no need of us, He made us in His overflowing love. Here we are, in the sea of life ; or, if you prefer the analogy, in the cornfield. There is nothing that has happened to us that was not meant to ripen us for God's harvest. If untoward events have withered our souls, the rude blasts of loveless folk have embittered us, and we are broken and trodden under foot, let us know that God's eye is still upon us. No single blade of corn in His field is unwanted by Him. He will not crush the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax. Rather, if we open our hearts to receive the cool waters of His Grace, if we raise up our heads to bask again in the sunshine of His presence, He will revive

¹ Heb. vi. 6.

us and refashion us and gather us into His bosom.
But the road is the way of suffering. Be sure of that.
As it was with Peter, it must be for us :

“Till that which perfect is shall shine with fuller glow,
And that be done away which here in part we know.”



A SERMON

BY THE

REVD. FRANCIS UNDERHILL

(WARDEN OF LIDDON HOUSE, PRIEST IN CHARGE OF
GROSVENOR CHAPEL, AND CANON THEOLOGIAN OF
LIVERPOOL CATHEDRAL).

"All the whole heavens are the Lord's ; the earth hath He
given to the children of men. We will praise the Lord, from
this time forth for evermore. Praise the Lord."—PSALM cxv.
16 and 18.

No one can fully appreciate the loveliness of England who has not at some time in his life been in the summer-time in a southern country and seen a dried-up landscape. It is not only that all is yellow, grey and gold—and very beautiful in its own way ; it is also that there is no rain for months and little or no running water, and that even the springs are used up by the thirsty villages for drinking and washing and the irrigation of a little space of garden and orchard. None of the water gets away to make green meadows and woodland ; the imperious needs of man require it all, unless it is one of the very few big streams which at last find their way to the distant river. The unpitying sun blazes down on

the fields, and nothing can be made to grow in them until the next rainy season transforms them for a little while into cornfields and gardens.

How different is our beautiful country. Even in August it is only here and there, and for a little while, that the grass is burnt ; any day a grateful shower may come and transform it again quickly into the verdant colours we know so well. Our great trees, our almost evergreen orchards, our ceaselessly running and abundant brooks and rivers and our gardens, everywhere show freshness and abundance.

“ . . . Every sound is sweet ;
Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees.”

But further : anyone who looks thoughtfully at an English landscape, unless it be in the mountain districts, must be struck by the obvious fact that it is for the most part man-made ; that so far as you can distinguish here between the work of God and man, long centuries of intensive civilization have changed the earth as nature made it to the lovely cultivated scene at which we are looking. In middle England, for instance, experts in such matters tell us that the aspect of things is vastly changed even from what Shakespeare saw in his day in the country round Stratford. The flocks and herds are

bigger and stronger, the flowers more varied and finer, the extent of land under cultivation as compared with waste and woodland is larger, the general effect of what we see is altogether richer. And this in the short space of three centuries. One who stands on a hill in such country sees many-coloured fields of corn and other crops, neatly divided by thick hedges, and interspersed with carefully tended woods, copses and orchards. It is a beautiful, a refined, an essentially modern picture.

How did it come to be? Well, many thousands of years ago, far behind recorded history, some nameless genius, or some tribe of forgotten wise men, discovered, who knows how, that if you grubbed about in the ground whence you dug your wild roots or picked your exiguous grass seeds, those which came the next year were the better because you had turned up the soil where they grew. How this supreme discovery was made, or who made it, no one will ever know. But it was made; and in the course of thousands of years many further improvements followed. It must have been found, for instance, that you could grub (i.e., plough) more efficiently with a stick or a big stone than with your hand. Then there must have followed the further knowledge that a stick shod with metal, when metal was at last discovered, was a more effective plough still;

and so it went on, until we arrive at historic times, and find the plough already in immemorial use by the Hebrew patriarchs, the Homeric heroes, the inhabitants of Crete, Ur or India. And to-day we have the motor-plough and all its mechanical accompaniments.

That is a brief and imaginative summary of the process of these things, as archæology, anthropology and history show it to us. But there has always been another element in the story of the plough and of human cultivation. From the remotest pre-historic days when man began to cultivate the ground, and for countless centuries before that, he has felt that there was something mysterious and perilous about the processes of the earth. How does it all happen? Man drops a seed into the ground he has prepared for it; he waits for a few months, doing little or nothing about it; and lo, it comes up from the ground again multiplied twentyfold, fiftyfold, a hundredfold! Why this miracle?

It must, of course, so argued our primitive ancestors, be owing to unseen powers of which we know little but which must be propitiated, so that they may willingly perform their functions for the good of man. So there grew up, not only magic rites which might be relied upon to cause the hidden powers to give good harvests, but also, perhaps later, the thought that it was

fitting and right to thank the spirits for their kindness in seeing to things which, for all he might do himself, were beyond the unaided powers even of the wisest of men. So when history begins to emerge from the doubtful mists of earlier times, we find such conceptions of man's interest and duty already in existence.

Ancient Harvest Rites

There grows up soon, then, in man's history a double sense of need and duty in regard to the gifts of the earth; he must do all he can by propitiation of the spirits to ensure that the harvest shall be a good one; he must also be careful to thank them for what they have done. One of the most picturesque aspects of the ancient Roman religion, long before the coming of Christianity, is the ritual of sowing and harvest, so important and so perilous. There was a dark primitive side to this, involving sometimes human sacrifice and other barbarous superstitions; and there is also, lasting far down into historical times, the idea that the waste land beyond the cultivated fields—the word “forest” simply means the wild “outside” the village and its immediate surroundings—was full of dangerous gods and spirits, to say nothing of even more harmful wild

beasts. Therefore, at the time of the sowings, there were processions, with song, dance and ceremonial, all round the fields, the object being to exclude magically the many powers of evil. And at harvest home, as the ancient Hebrew, Greek and Latin and other writers tell us, there were again ceremonies on every farm and in each village, praising the kind gods who had kept the flocks and the herds, the corn and the vine and the olive tree from harm, at the critical times when no less than life or death, plenty or starvation, might hang in the balance.

The Action of the Church

It is common knowledge nowadays that there is no such complete breach as there was once thought to be between everything that is Christian and everything which was pre-Christian and pagan. The Church in her wisdom, following the example of her Lord, built often on the foundation of devotion and folk-memory which was already there; sanctifying them no doubt, and giving them a depth of spiritual meaning far beyond what had been there before. Did not our Lord Himself when He instituted the two chief Sacraments of Christianity, take the common ideas of washing, purifying and fructifying with water, and the common meal of

bread and wine, as symbols of the holiest ideas man's mind could comprehend ?

So it was with these ancient rituals of seed-time and harvest. The Church found them already there, in immemorial love and respect, and she took them over and blessed them. She ordered in very early days that processions to implore God's blessing on the sowing should go through and around the fields in the spring time. The Rogation Days, too little remembered in modern times, are very ancient indeed, and should be observed by Christians everywhere. And there is also the feast of harvest home at the ingathering. Here in our rich and beautiful England we are not likely to lose sight of the bountiful gifts of God in the earth. It is well that both these seasons should be kept with prayer and thanksgiving. They are as ancient as man's religion ; and though in what we were thinking just now about primitive man and his fears and hopes and discoveries, we may have seemed not to be considering the Godward side of it, it was, of course, fully in mind. For who was it but the Spirit of God who led our rude ancestors to make these world-shaking discoveries ? Who was it who taught him as he could take it in, the gradual truth about God's working in providence, and the need of fearing and loving the giver of all things ?

A More General View

But we must now extend our view of the goodness of God and of our duty of thanksgiving. In the early view of these things, as we have seen, the sentiments which led man to something like religion were compounded of fear and self-interest, and were confined for the most part to times and occasions when the aid of gods or spirits was more particularly needed. When the time of peril passed, the higher powers might be forgotten for a time; at least until there was again reason to suppose that they might be troublesome or useful. It was a barbarous religion, but it was the best our ancestors could read. Christianity, as we have seen, has changed all that, *at least in theory*, for it is difficult not sometimes to fear that deep down in modern religion, quite unrealized, there may be still surviving elements of the old-world thought of seeking the gods when they were evidently useful, and otherwise neglecting them. How else are we to account for the curious fact that there are still quite a good many people in England to-day who will gladly go to the Harvest Festival, and are seldom seen in church at other times? They do not of course think it out; but it is rather likely that we have here an

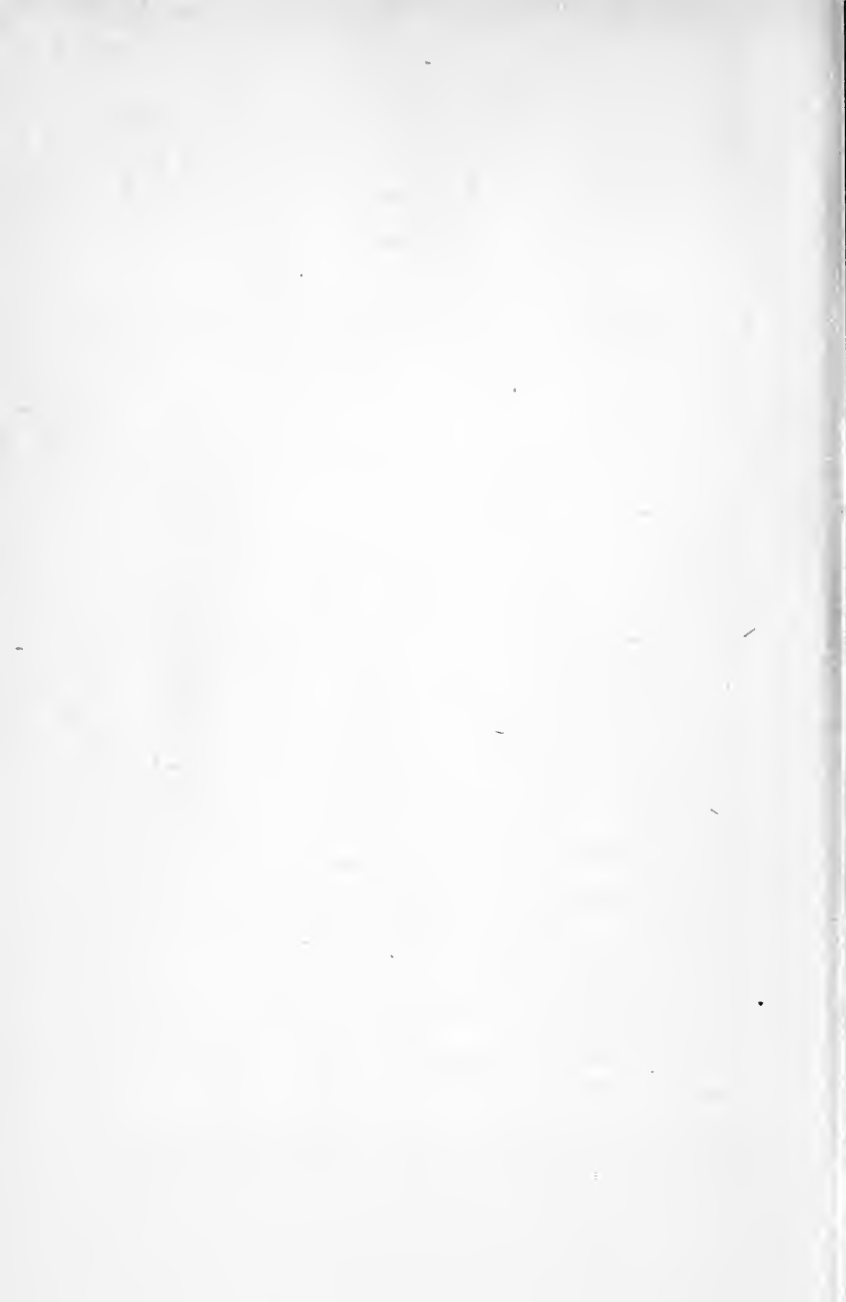
unconscious instinct reasserting itself in these later days. We must extend our view. Prayer and thanksgiving for these beautiful gifts of God, the keeping of Rogation days and Harvest Thanksgivings are altogether good ; but they should be for the Christian man and woman just one expression of what should be an abiding state of mind, which finds cause for thankfulness everywhere and at all times. This service is a summing up, indeed, of many thanksgivings, for many blessings ; but it must not stand apart. Here the Christian tradition carries us far beyond the view of primitive man. Our prayer is not merely petition, asking God for things, though that is good. Nor is it merely thanksgiving for some special manifestation of God's goodness, though that is good also. But the life of the true Christian is filled with thanksgiving at all times, and for all gifts, small as well as great. He lifts up his eyes thankfully to the hills, and sees them white to harvest ; and he thanks God for His overflowing bounty. He thanks God, blesses Him, and prays for a fuller capacity for adoration. But he is mindful that the God of all the beauty who has so blessed him in this side of his life is always present ; and he sees Him everywhere, in the loveliness of our rich countryside and in the ordinary things of daily life. He finds beauty in them all—in love, joy, happiness,

friends, games, hobbies ; so that life itself is not long enough for all the gratitude of his heart.

And there is one more harvest thought, the chief and greatest of all, without which any sermon on the Festival would be utterly incomplete. The highest of all uses to which the fruits of the earth have ever been put is the Holy Communion. When our Lord, on the night before He suffered, purposed to leave a gift behind, which was to be beyond all others, He did not take some extraordinary and valuable objects for His purposes, nor did He mark the occasion by some strange and unheard-of action. He chose the ordinary bread and wine, the food shared by noble and peasant alike, and made them the vehicles of that memorial of himself by which they were ever to remember Him ; and also the means of Grace by which He assures to us His abiding Presence. The Holy Eucharist is for ever associated with the harvest. The bread and wine He used when instituting it grew on the hillsides of Palestine ; the same outward signs were made the means of conveying Him to His people in this church of yours to-day.

It follows that no thanksgiving for the harvest is complete without Communion ; both because the Holy Eucharist is the supreme act of Christian thanksgiving, and because it is so intimately connected with that life

of the fields and that beauty of the earth which have surrounded man from the beginning. Our religion is indeed of Heaven, and unites us to our Father who is in Heaven; but it is intimately connected also with the splendour of colour and form by which His love surrounds us. Well may we thank Him to-day for all His goodness, rededicating ourselves to Him with a fresh purpose of filling our whole life with continual adoration. "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live : I will praise my God while I have my being."



A SERMON
BY THE
REVD. CANON ROSE
(VICAR OF BRIGHTON).

Psalm iv 7 (R.V.).

WE are to-day taking part in the most ancient of all the Festivals which our Church keeps. I do not say the most important; obviously to-day is not so important as Christmas or Easter, nor is it a Festival in quite the same sense. Yet in its origin it is older than they are and goes back to pre-Christian days.

In Old Testament times there were actually three feasts connected with the harvest: the Feast of Unleavened Bread which marked its beginning: the Feast of Weeks, seven weeks later, when the corn harvest was over and two loaves made of the new corn were offered to the Lord: and finally the Feast of Tabernacles or of Ingathering, when the corn had been threshed and the olives and grapes picked and all was garnered and ready against the winter. This last was the real harvest home, the feast at which Solomon dedicated his temple, the greatest of all the feasts of the Old Testament.

But at each of these there is the same note sounded ; the note of joyful thanksgiving—"They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest." "Thou hast put gladness in my heart," says the Psalmist ; "more than they have when their corn and their wine are increased." "I feel happier than men at a harvest home." God has provided for another year ; therefore rejoice and be glad.

So to-day we thank God for our food ; and I always like to feel that not only for our food, but for all those rather obvious things which we so easily may forget—the roof over our heads, the clothes on our backs, our health, our friends, our interests—for all these things without which life would be so different, we come to offer God our joyful thanks.

But it is good to remember that joy is a note not simply of harvest, but of Christianity itself. From the beginning it was so—"Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy," said the Angel to the Shepherds. And at the end of Christ's earthly life, after His ascension, when His Apostles knew that they would see Him in the old way no more and that a new life of adventure and danger was opening before them, "they returned to Jerusalem with joy." And so in St. Paul, time and time again—"Rejoice in the Lord alway" ; "The fruit

of the spirit is joy." Christianity is a religion of joy and the true Christian is always joyful, not only on special occasions.

Those of you who have read the lives of the Saints—those of you who have been privileged to know really holy men and women, will remember that there is about them an infectious gaiety, which communicates itself to others round them. It is by this, perhaps, that real holiness can most readily be distinguished from the pious prudery which often masquerades as such. St. Francis, we are told, as he walked along the lanes, would take a couple of sticks and tucking one under his chin, use the other as a bow, and would dance along, singing songs to the accompaniment of his improvised violin. He loved, too, to speak French, "albeit he spoke it very badly." Joy ought to be as much characteristic of a Christian as honesty or truthfulness. In fact, when St. Paul set out to describe what sort of impression a Christian would make on other men, after he had said that the fruit of the Spirit is love, the second thing that struck him was joy. He would, of course, be also good and sober, and so on; but, as St. Paul thought of him, it was joyfulness that came into his head before any of these other things.

Joy ought to be characteristic of all Christians. But

is it ? Are those who profess and call themselves Christians joyful always ? Are they even trying to be ? In that wonderful War book, "A Student in Arms", the writer sums up thus the conception of a Christian, as held by many of those amongst whom he was serving : "He thinks that Christianity consists in believing the Bible and setting up to be better than your neighbours. By believing the Bible, he means believing that Jonah was swallowed by a whale. By setting up to be better than your neighbours, he means not drinking, not swearing, and preferably not smoking, being close-fisted with your money, avoiding the companionship of doubtful characters, and refusing to acknowledge that such have any claim on you."

This is no doubt a caricature, yet it does represent, not unfairly, the conception of Christianity which exists among a large class of people, and at any rate there is a type of Christianity which goes some way towards justifying it. Do you remember the elder brother of the Prodigal Son ? When he heard the noise and was told his brother had returned, and that the festivities were in his honour, he said : "What ! for that young black-guard !" There is an acid type of Christian who seems to have forgotten the good tidings of great joy ; and who, as long as he can keep himself respectable, says piously :

“God, I thank thee that I am not as other men,” and sits back, well content with himself.

What is wrong with such ? Well, I think the trouble is that they have never really understood the Gospel. When those twelve men, full of enthusiasm, rushed down from the Upper at Pentecost, to speak, because they could not keep silent, what was the message they gave from God, which spread like wildfire throughout the world ? They said three things : first, they said, in spite of all the difficulties, in spite of all the things hard to explain, we believe that God loves the world, and that He has given Himself for it. Secondly, they said, God calls for your help ; come in with us—you, and you, and you—and give yourselves too. And thirdly, they said, don’t say who am I that God should want me ? Don’t be afraid. If you obey His call, He will see you through. He will give you strength to do the task to which you set your hand.

God’s love ; God’s call ; and God’s promise. These are the three great truths which the Gospel proclaims. When these have become *personal* to a man, how can he help being joyful ?

There is a good old-fashioned word, which I think we hear too little nowadays ; a word which means just this ; and the word is Conversion. The converted man

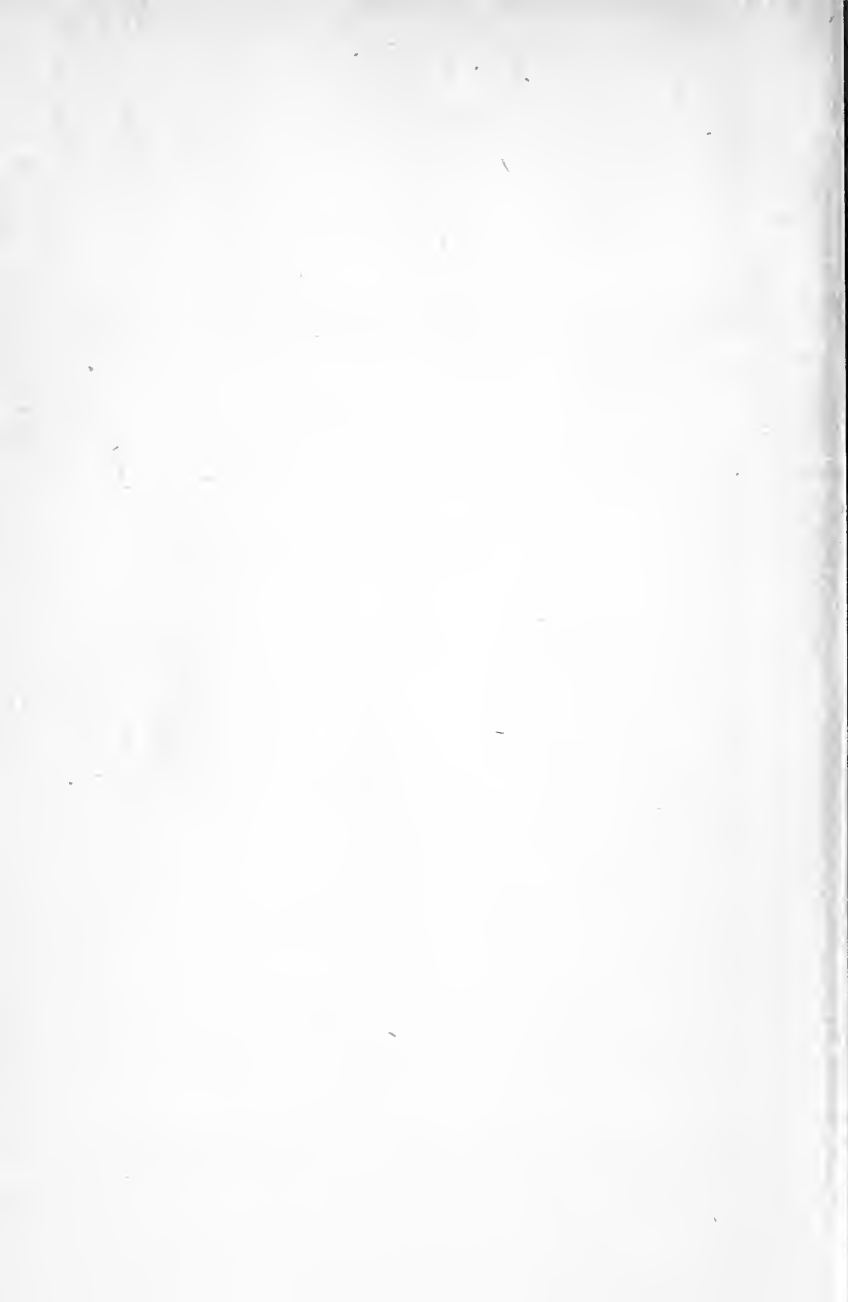
is he who has turned round, has turned his back on evil, and turned his face to God. And the man whose Christianity has no joy in it, is surely the unconverted man. That's what is wrong. For the converted man has known God's love, heard God's call and trusted God's promise. And how can he help being joyful? For life is no longer a burden, no longer a matter of obeying rules and keeping oneself respectable. It becomes a great adventure; an opportunity of serving one who loves and helps. Like Abraham, the Father of the Faithful who "went out not knowing whither he went," he goes out, having put the past behind him, and relying on God's promise for the future; joyful in the thought that he is called to serve so great and generous a Master.

To be joyful doesn't mean to be always laughing. In a sinful and suffering world the Christian must sometimes suffer with Christ for sin, not necessarily his own sin, but the sins of others. But there will be in him an underlying joy which colours his outlook, and breaks out in his relationships with his fellow men, because God is his friend, and God asks for his service.

We are here to thank God for the Harvest. But St. Paul goes further than that. He says: "Give thanks always for all things." Meet life as it comes in a spirit of thankfulness. If you believe in God, then whatever

happens to you is a challenge, an opportunity for serving Him. You can make what you will out of life's happenings. Meet them in the right spirit and whatever they may be, you can make them into means of service.

By the spirit in which he meets life, the converted man can transform his world. For he remembers God's love, God's call and God's promise, and so he can say: "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, More than they have when their corn and their wine are increased."



A SERMON

BY THE

REVD. PERCY MARYON-WILSON, M.A.

[VICAR OF ST. MARY THE VIRGIN, SOMERS TOWN, AND
MAGDALEN COLLEGE (OXFORD) MISSIONER.]

"The Grass Withereth. . . ."

"And Moses said, 'This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. Let no man leave of it till the morning. Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto Moses, but some of them left of it until the morning, and it bred worms and stank.'—EXODUS xvi. 19, 20.

BREAD, being the most necessary of all perishable things which we need for our daily use, is a symbol or sign of the world of nature—that world, which, because it is so full of death, has even suggested to men's minds the awful possibility that it might be the enemy of God, whose offer to man is everlasting life.

"Are God and Nature then at strife
That Nature lends such evil dreams?
So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life."

For this is the fate of bread, to breed worms and stink. Corruption. This is what happens to everything which belongs simply to this world—it goes bad,

crumbles away and disappears. It is the law of nature. Everything which we touch, taste and handle, as St. Paul says, "perishes with the using".¹

These beautiful things in church to-night are all dying as we look at them. Think of some of the loveliest things in Nature—the delicate colours and contours of the evening sky, which we can see even here in grimy London, or of some tiny flower in a country lane. The colour has faded from the sky almost before you have had time to enjoy it. Pick the flower to pieces. There is nothing but dead form and dead colour. Its magic was in the imagination which was able to be moved by it, not in the earthly substance and shape of the thing itself.

That is equally true of everything which belongs to the world of Nature. One of the greatest natural geniuses, dying young in utter disappointment, wished to have engraved on his tomb: "Here lies one whose name was a stream of water running away." Human genius is exactly like these flowers—"the glory of man is as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away."²

⁶ Or think of human ambition, the ambition to do good in the world, to be a benefactor. How easily, how often selfishness triumphs over it. How quickly it

¹ Col. ii. 22.

² I Peter i. 24.

betrays its origin and its doom by signs of self-satisfaction, by its failure even to live up to its own natural ideals. It has not got within it the vitality to be true even to the good (though limited) intentions with which it began.

Now, a Harvest Festival is a powerful sermon on this subject. So far from being able to contemplate these fruits of the earth with mere satisfaction, the sight of them is a reminder that if this world is our only home, we shall all soon be homeless. If our only knowledge of God is of One who "paints the wayside flower" and "lights the evening star", we are committed to frequent periods of atheism, for you cannot comfort yourself with the evening star as you go to work in the morning, and there are no wayside flowers in the slums. It is a pretty piece of poetry, but it does not take you very far, though a good many sentimental tears are shed over these words in village churches at this season. Left just as it is, this church would look very different next Sunday—very soon these lovely blossoms would be rotting on their stalks.

These flowers are here to point us away from themselves to the Everlasting God who gave them. The only enduring quality which they possess is the gratitude which they can inspire in us. Just as the value of a photograph is its power to remind us of the person

which it conjures in our minds, as we look behind it, so to speak, to the real face, to the living personality, which we know and love, increasing our dissatisfaction with anything less than the presence of the friend whose features it so imperfectly portrays, so these gifts of nature cry out to us to be content with nothing less than the Giver himself—

“They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they.”

Looking beyond them to the Giver, they remind us that Christians are “partakers of the *divine* nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world.” ¹

“We do well,” says a great dissenting preacher, “to be on our guard even when, as to-day, we are thinking of God’s goodness in temporal things. Human nature is something altogether different from mere nature; and the true God comes to us not as we consider idly the general fruitfulness of the world, but as we lift our eyes to Him who gave Himself to death for us all. The danger of all nature-teaching is that it puts away the Cross, and no way is really safe for man that is not marked with the sign of the Cross.” ²

¹ II Peter i. 4.

² Revd. J. A. Hutton, D.D., “The Victory over Victory”, p. 219.

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”¹ And only the things of the Spirit of God can satisfy the soul, for it is they alone which endure. “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lust thereof.”²

It is to the Heart of Jesus Christ our Saviour to which we must go. There is no home here among these beautiful, haunting symbols of death. We pile the flowers on the coffins of the beloved dead, and the flowers themselves are drooping even before the cemetery is reached. All the flowers in the world could not avail to bring their souls to Paradise. It takes something supernatural to do that—“those that sleep *in Jesus* shall God bring with Him.” For Jesus, true God and true Man, is the rightful King of both worlds. Your wreath, upon which you spend so much loving thought, cannot help the dead. At best, it is an expression of your heart’s love, and *your* love could never avail to raise the dead. “. . . No man may deliver his brother : nor make agreement unto God for him. For it cost more to redeem their souls. . . ”³ It cost the life-blood

¹ I Cor. ii. 14.² I John ii. 17.³ Ps. xlix, 7, 8.

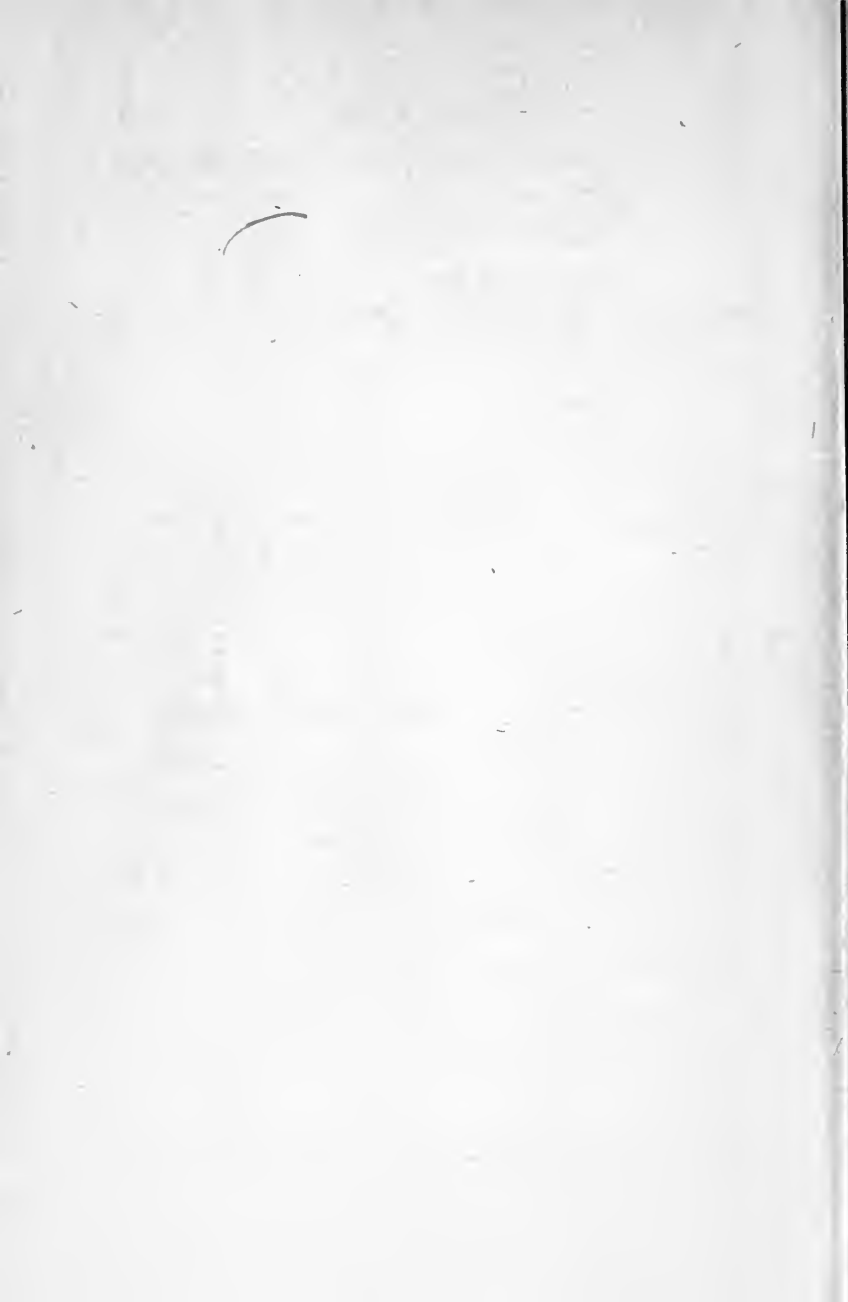
of the Prince of Life—"the precious stream" which fills the chalices of the Catholic Church. A wreath is but a dying thing, and it is an undying soul that you are pursuing with your love. But your *prayers* can reach them, because in prayer we pass beyond the limits of this natural world, we reach out to where God Himself is, we "cling Heaven by the hems", we place our wills with Him who hears the prayer and unto whom all flesh come.

In the garden of a beautiful house at Beaconsfield, which was formerly a Retreat House, there stood a great Crucifix, half-way along a wall, with a long stretch of flowers on either side of it. And whether by the gardener's art or by accident, I do not know, the flowers leant over, on both sides, towards the figure of Christ crucified.

And these flowers and fruits of our Festival are doing the same. We have enjoyed them for a day (and they will give comfort to the sick in hospitals for another), but they are under sentence of death. They are pointing to Jesus, who gave them to us. They would be content to be forgotten, could they but think, if only they might turn our eyes to Him before they die. Though nothing in themselves, yet they will have fulfilled a great purpose if one day you and I are reminded of them again, when,

on the wings of that grateful faith which they have
helped to inspire, we soar upwards into the visible
Presence of Him, the one true Lover of souls,

“Around whose pierced feet
Fair flowers of Paradise extend,
Their fragrance ever sweet.”



A SERMON

BY THE

REVD. THE HON. JAMES ADDERLEY,

M.A. (RECTOR OF ST. EDMUND, K. AND M.,
LOMBARD ST., E.C.).

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey the lusts thereof; neither present your members unto sin as instruments (or weapons) of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God as alive from the dead and your members as instruments (or weapons) unto God.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”—ROM. vi. 12, 13, 23.

WE have come together to make a solemn act of Thanksgiving unto God for His gift of life. We have in mind all the gifts of God for which we thank Him, but especially for what He gives to us for the life of the body. Now there are two things which we find it rather difficult to say wholeheartedly, especially when we are children. The first is “If you please” and the second is “Thank you”.¹ We were taught to say these words and we did not always see exactly why we should. I suppose it was that we should learn not to snatch at things as if we had a right to anything we wanted to have. We were to wait and say:

¹ I am indebted to Bishop Freri for this illustration.

"If you please" not as a mere formula of politeness but as expressing a real truth that we were dependent on others for everything. Our gratitude came sometimes even more reluctantly and especially when we did not particularly care for what was being given to us. Now when it comes to gifts from God we are even more in difficulties because we do not at once see why He gives us things or of what use some of the things are. Prayer is saying "If you please" to God and Thanksgiving which is a very important part of prayer is saying "Thank you" to Him.

But this difficulty in seeing why we should thus speak to God is quite natural. Why should we ask God for things, seeing that He knows our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking. It is not because God wants to know our needs. He knows them already and far better than we do ourselves. It is because he wants *us* to know them. He wants us to realize our utter dependence on Him. So He tells us to come and tell Him what we think we want and He will set us right. We see this especially in the matter of confession of sin. God knows exactly what our sins and their sinfulness are. He knows how far we have tried to overcome temptation, He knows how far we really are to blame. Like a father with an erring child He says, "Come and

tell me what you have done," not because He does not know but because He wants us to feel ashamed of ourselves by speaking it out in His presence. It is the same with Thanksgiving such as we are making now.

Thanksgiving is a public acknowledgment of our dependence on the Great Giver, a dependence we are not sufficiently aware of, but which the acknowledgment helps us to recognize. We do not feel grateful as we ought, and this is largely because the same reason as we just now noticed that we do not exactly appreciate the gift or know how to use it. Just as we feel easily grateful for the gift of an instrument which we know how to play, but not so easily for one we are ignorant of, and do not particularly want to learn, so it is with the gift of God. He has given us a soul and a body and, judging from the care we fail to give them, it looks as if we did not appreciate them. A Harvest Thanksgiving is an excellent opportunity for a self-examination.

Why does God give me a body and take care of it? Why does he feed me and clothe me and keep me in health? When I consider my body and the use I put it to it looks as if I had forgotten, if I ever knew, why God gave it to me. Yet God seems to care a great deal. On all sides I see the evidence of His care and love. Day by day He renews my strength. But for what

purpose ? Now St. Paul in the words of my text gives me one answer to the question. He puts side by side the right and the wrong way of using the body. He pictures the body as a kingdom over which Sin may reign, dealing out the wages of death, or a sphere where the loving Father God may bestow His gift of eternal life. There is a deadly kind of worship which we can offer to the tyrant Sin. We can "present" our bodies unto Sin as instruments or weapons of unrighteousness or we can present them as instruments or weapons of righteousness to God. As we come before God in Thanksgiving let us ask ourselves honestly, "Are we being kept alive as weapons of unrighteousness ?" If so, it is not life but death.

The works of the flesh are manifest which are these, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings and suchlike." What a terrible thing to be thanking God for a body which we are treating like that. On the other hand what a glorious thing to be presenting our bodies, giving them back to God, as weapons of righteousness, carrying out His purpose, at least wanting to be what He made us for and for which He keeps us alive. But it is not only St. Paul who gives me the answer when I ask what is to

be done with my body which God has given me. The greatest answer of all is in God's own greatest gift to man, Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The Incarnation was the way by which God made manifest in the flesh His intention in the creation of mankind. He prepared a body for Jesus Christ. In that body He came to do God's will absolutely and completely in view of all men. "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" is the announcement to the whole world of God's purpose in making man and therefore also in making me and in bestowing upon me the gifts for which I profess to be thanking Him now. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. The truth of God is spoken by His lips. The grace of God is in His sacred Humanity which He imparts to us by His spirit and in His sacraments. Do you know this? If not, have you really become a Christian yet?

What a blessed thing that in the midst of the seemingly earthly surroundings of a Harvest Festival, for it must needs be that outwardly there seems more of earth than Heaven in a Harvest than in the great spiritual feasts of Christmas and Easter, you should be lifted up to the very highest and see in Jesus the perfection of what you might be and do in your ordinary everyday life!

Have you had the experience which sometimes is felt

when we come into contact with real art and feel our own failure to have even understood before what art is. We have perhaps dabbled in art ourselves, we have painted or played or written a few verses or acted a part. Then we see the real thing in the hands of an expert at a theatre or a picture gallery or hear it at a concert hall. Life for us takes on a new turn. We know now what we were meant for or perhaps what we were not meant for but thought we were. It is something like this when a man becomes aware of the perfect humanity of our Lord.

This, then, is the real man. This is "the body" presented to God. Or we listen to the Lord at the table of the Last Supper and we hear him say: "This is my body which is given for you." And we ask ourselves: If I told the real truth could I say anything like that about my body? Should I not have to say: "This is my body which I have pampered and spoilt with vanity and lust.

This is my brain with which I have tricked my neighbour or planned my self-indulgences and avarice. The one thing I have not done with my body is to give it for others in any kind of sacrifice. If the thought of our Lord in His perfection seems to me too remote let me think the same about those who have tried to follow

in His train, men and women who have spent their strength of body in working for the world's welfare, missionaries at home and abroad, philanthropists who have furthered great humanitarian causes, writers, poets, musicians, inventors, students, doctors who have counted their lives as nothing and have found them unto life eternal. If these again seem remote think of the fathers and mothers, the teachers of children, some friends of yours unknown to the outside world whom you know to have sacrificed themselves.

Whether they knew it or not it remains true that it was God who made them live and it was He who called them on from strength to strength. It was He who deserved their thanks and for them you are thanking God to-day.

There remains one more thought which Christians must have in connection with a thanksgiving to God for His gifts. They cannot do these things in their own strength. The Pharisee who thanked God he was not as other men are was not really thanking God, he was thanking himself. He was self-satisfied that he had observed fasts and paid tithes. The publican simply beat his breast and declared himself a sinner. He waited for God to justify him. So when we look at Jesus Christ as God's great gift to mankind it is not simply

an example which we think we can follow in our way and by our own power. Nor has he left us to find that out for ourselves.

In the very act of showing us the example of sacrifice he tells us how we can share with Him the power to make it. In no mere metaphor He takes bread the food of the body of man and calls it His Body and gives it to us for spiritual food. The highest act of thanksgiving is the Eucharist, not only because we are thanking Christ for His sacrifice but because we are feeding on the same strong meat with which He did the Father's will. So St. Paul says that the gift of eternal life is "in Jesus Christ" and it is that which we receive in Holy Communion. So, while we thank God for the ordinary food for the body, our daily bread, meant, as we have seen, to give us physical strength with which we can fight and work for God, we cannot leave it at that but must have in our minds that greater food which is the body of Christ Himself.

Every Harvest Thanksgiving to have its proper result should mean an increase of faithful and regular communicants. It should mean the coming back of those who have lapsed. It should mean a renewal of Confirmation resolutions. The determination not to be any longer content to live without Communion.

Praise for his beautiful world of nature :

"He the golden tressed sun
Caused all day his course to run,
The horned moon to shine by night,
'Mid her spangled sisters bright."

but also

"For richer food than this
Pledge of everlasting bliss.
For His mercies still endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure."

THE END







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